



March 9, 2005

Indictment charges crack cocaine trafficking in “Royal Flush” investigation

A federal grand jury has charged **Pedro Hernandez-Rodriguez**, 25, with conspiracy to distribute crack cocaine. Deputy U.S. Marshals arrested Hernandez-Rodriguez yesterday in Orlando, Florida (*See the accompanying U.S. Marshals Service news release*). He had been a fugitive since November, when a federal arrest warrant was issued on charges stemming from Operation Royal Flush, a task force investigation into alleged drug trafficking by members and associates of the Almighty Latin Kings Nation.

United States Attorney Robert Clark Corrente, Mark R. Trouville, Special Agent in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration, and Colonel Dean Esserman, Chief of the Providence Police Department, jointly announced a one-count indictment, which the grand jury returned today in U.S. District Court, Providence.

The indictment alleges that on August 5, 2004, Hernandez-Rodriguez, who is also known as Kiko, conspired with others to distribute and to possess with intent to distribute five grams or more of cocaine base. The penalty prescribed by statute, upon conviction, is five to 40 years' imprisonment and a maximum fine of \$2,000,000. An indictment is merely an allegation and a defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

Hernandez-Rodriguez, whose address is unknown, is detained in federal custody in Florida pending his removal to Rhode Island for prosecution.

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Operation Royal Flush, a multi-agency task force investigation resulted in federal drug-trafficking charges against 13 defendants. Six have pleaded guilty and are awaiting sentencing. State charges were filed against an additional 13 defendants.

Eight federal, state, and municipal law enforcement agencies contributed resources to Operation Royal Flush: **Providence Police, DEA, ATF, the FBI, ICE, the U.S. Marshals Service, Rhode Island State Police, and East Providence Police.** **Newport and Pawtucket Police** have detectives assigned to the DEA Task Force that worked on the investigation. The **Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigations**, has also joined the investigation. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Mary E. Rogers and Stephen G. Dambruch are prosecuting the federal cases.

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